

I. CLAIM LISTING

A listing of the claims is provided here for convenience. No claim amendments are intended.

1. -- 13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously presented) A distribution system that comprises:

at least one network server that provides a web site having audio files available for download by web site visitors,
wherein one or more of the audio files includes an embedded audio message from a sponsor.

15. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 14, wherein the web site determines royalties payable to persons from which distribution rights for the audio files have been obtained.

16. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 15, wherein the royalty is based at least in part on a number of times an audio file is downloaded.

17. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 14, wherein the sponsor is someone other than an operator of the web site.

18. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 17, wherein the sponsor is someone other than an artist or author of the audio file.

19. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 14, wherein the sponsor is someone who has paid an operator of the web site to embed a message in one or more audio files.

20. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 14, wherein the web site is configured to accept uploads of audio files and sponsor messages.

21. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 20, wherein the web site is configured to embed at least one sponsor message in an uploaded audio file before making that audio file available for download.

22. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 14, wherein said audio files include musical performances.

23. (Previously presented) The network-accessible download service of claim 14, wherein the audio files are downloadable in a compressed audio format.

24. (Previously presented) A playback method that comprises:
downloading an audio file with an audible advertisement from a web site to a computer; and
transferring the audio file from the computer to an external playing device that plays the
audible advertisement when playing the audio file.

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the external playing device plays the audible advertisement each time it plays the audio file.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 25, wherein the audio file includes a song or single.

27. (Previously presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the audible advertisement is provided by a sponsor other than an artist or author of the audio file.

28. (Previously presented) The method of claim 27, wherein the audible advertisement is appended at the beginning of the audio file after the audio file is received by the web site, but before the audio file is made available for downloading.

29. (Previously presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the audio file is saved on said computer in MP3 format.

30. (Previously presented) A distribution method that comprises:
receiving a message file having an audible message to be provided for a fee paid by a message provider;
receiving licensed multimedia files;
appending the message file to the beginning of each of multiple licensed multimedia data files to provide combined files;
making the combined files available on an Internet website for download by end users; and

transmitting at least one combined file to a user to store the combined file in its entirety for later playback.

31. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, further comprising determining a royalty payment to a provider of a licensed multimedia file based at least in part on a number of downloads of combined files including that multimedia file.

32. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, further comprising receiving from the message provider an identification of multimedia files to be combined with a message file.

33. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, further comprising receiving from the message provider a selection of a genre of multimedia files to be combined with a message file.

34. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, further comprising transmitting said at least one combined file to a second different user to store for later playback.

35. (Previously presented) An advertising method that comprises:

creating a combined audio file from two audio files, wherein at least one of the two audio files produces an advertising message when played;

making the combined audio file accessible for download by multiple users via a computer network; and

transmitting the combined audio file to a user computer where the entire combined audio file is saved for later playback or transfer to an external multimedia player.

36. (Previously presented) The method of claim 35, further comprising transmitting the combined audio file to each of multiple users to store.

37. (Previously presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the advertising message is played each time a user plays the combined audio file saved on the user computer.